

PSALM CXX.

Suddenly we have left the continent of the vast Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm for the islands and islets of the Songs of Degrees. It may be well to engage in protracted devotion upon a special occasion, but this must cast no slur upon the sacred brevities which sanctify the godly life day by day. He who inspired the longest Psalm was equally the author of the short compositions which follow it.

TITLE.—A SONG OF DEGREES.—*We have already devoted a sufficient space to the consideration of this title in its application to this Psalm and the fourteen compositions which succeed it. These appear to us to be Pilgrim Psalms, but we are not sure that they were always sung in company; for many of them are in the first person singular. No doubt there were solitary pilgrims as well as troops who went to the house of God in company, and for these lonely ones hymns were prepared.*

SUBJECT.—*A certain author supposes that this hymn was sung by an Israelite upon leaving his house to go up to Jerusalem. He thinks that the good man had suffered from the slander of his neighbours, and was glad to get away from their gossip, and spend his time in the happier engagements of the holy feasts. It may be so, but we hope that pious people were not so foolish as to sing about their bad neighbours when they were leaving them for a few days. If they wished to leave their houses in safety, and to come home to kind surroundings, it would have been the height of jolly to provoke those whom they were leaving behind by singing aloud a Psalm of complaint against them. We do not know why this ode is placed first among the Psalms of Degrees, and we had rather hazard no conjecture of our own. We prefer the old summary of the translators—"David prayeth against Doeg"—to any far-fetched supposition; and if this be the scope of the Psalm, we see at once why it suggested itself to David at the station where the ark abode, and from which he had come to remove it. He came to fetch away the ark, and at the place where he found it he thought of Doeg, and poured out his plaint concerning him. The author had been grievously calumniated, and had been tortured into bitterness by the false charges of his persecutors, and here is his appeal to the great Arbiter of right and wrong, before whose judgment-seat no man shall suffer from slanderous tongues.*

EXPOSITION.

IN my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.

2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, *and* from a deceitful tongue.

3 What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?

4 Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, *that* I dwell in the tents of Kedar!

6 My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.

7 *I am for* peace: but when I speak, they *are* for war.

1. "*In my distress.*" Slander occasions distress of the most grievous kind. Those who have felt the edge of a cruel tongue know assuredly that it is sharper than the sword. Calumny rouses our indignation by a sense of injustice, and yet we find ourselves helpless to fight with the evil, or to act in our own defence. We could ward off the strokes of a cutlass, but we have no shield against a liar's tongue. We do not know who was the father of the falsehood, nor where it was born, nor where it has gone, nor how to follow it, nor how to stay its withering influence. We are perplexed, and know not which way to turn. Like the plague of flies in Egypt, it baffles opposition, and few can stand before it. Detraction touches us in the tenderest point, cuts to the quick, and leaves a venom behind which it is difficult to extract. In all ways it is a sore distress to come under the power of "slander, the foulest whelp of sin." Even in such distress we need not hesitate to cry unto the Lord. Silence to man and prayer to God are the best cures for the evil of slander.

"*I cried unto the LORD*" (or Jehovah). The wisest course that he could follow. It is of little use to appeal to our fellows on the matter of slander, for the more we

stir in it the more it spreads ; it is of no avail to appeal to the honour of the slanderers, for they have none, and the most piteous demands for justice will only increase their malignity and encourage them to fresh insult. As well plead with panthers and wolves as with black-hearted traducers. However, when cries to man would be our weakness, cries to God will be our strength. To whom should children cry but to their father ? Does not some good come even out of that vile thing, falsehood, when it drives us to our knees and to our God ? "*And he heard me.*" Yes, Jehovah hears. He is the living God, and hence prayer to him is reasonable and profitable. The Psalmist remembered and recorded this instance of prayer-hearing, for it had evidently much affected him ; and now he rehearses it for the glory of God and the good of his brethren. "The righteous cry and the Lord heareth them." The ear of our God is not deaf, nor even heavy. He listens attentively, he catches the first accent of supplication ; he makes each of his children confess,—"*he heard me.*" When we are slandered it is a joy that the Lord knows us, and cannot be made to doubt our uprightness : he will not hear the lie against us, but he will hear our prayer against the lie.

If these Psalms were sung at the ascent of the ark to Mount Zion, and then afterwards by the pilgrims to Jerusalem at the annual festivals and at the return from Babylon, we shall find in the life of David a reason for this being made the first of them. Did not this servant of God meet with Doeg the Edomite when he enquired of the oracle by Abiathar, and did not that wretched creature belie him and betray him to Saul ? This made a very painful and permanent impression upon David's memory, and therefore in commencing the ark-journey he poured out his lament before the Lord, concerning the great and monstrous wrong of "that dog of a Doeg," as Trapp wittily calls him. The poet, like the preacher, may find it to his advantage to "begin low," for then he has the more room to rise : the next Psalm is a full octave above the present mournful hymn. Whenever we are abused it may console us to see that we are not alone in our misery : we are traversing a road upon which David left his footprints.

2. "*Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips.*" It will need divine power to save a man from these deadly instruments. Lips are soft ; but when they are *lying* lips they suck away the life of character and are as murderous as razors. Lips should never be red with the blood of honest men's reputes, nor salved with malicious falsehoods. David says, "Deliver my soul" : the soul, the life of the man, is endangered by lying lips ; cobras are not more venomous, nor devils themselves more pitiless. Some seem to lie for lying sake, it is their sport and spirit : their lips deserve to be kissed with a hot iron ; but it is not for the friends of Jesus to render to men according to their deserts. Oh for a dumb generation rather than a lying one ! The faculty of speech becomes a curse when it is degraded into a mean weapon for smiting men behind their backs. We need to be delivered from slander by the Lord's restraint upon wicked tongues, or else to be delivered out of it by having our good name cleared from the liar's calumny. "*And from a deceitful tongue.*" This is rather worse than downright falsehood. Those who fawn and flatter, and all the while have enmity in their hearts, are horrible beings ; they are the seed of the devil, and he worketh in them after his own deceptive nature. Better to meet wild beasts and serpents than deceivers : these are a kind of monster whose birth is from beneath, and whose end lies far below. It should be a warning to liars and deceivers when they see that all good men pray against them, and that even bad men are afraid of them. Here is to the believer good cause for prayer. "Deliver us from evil," may be used with emphasis concerning this business. From gossips, talebearers, writers of anonymous letters, forgers of newspaper paragraphs, and all sorts of liemongers, good Lord deliver us !

3. "*What shall be given unto thee ?*" What is the expected guerdon of slander ? It ought to be something great to make it worth while to work in so foul an atmosphere and to ruin one's soul. Could a thousand worlds be bribe enough for such villainous deeds ? The liar shall have no welcome recompense : he shall meet with his deserts ; but what shall they be ? What punishment can equal his crime ? The Psalmist seems lost to suggest a fitting punishment. It is the worst of offences—this detraction, calumny, and slander. Judgment sharp and crushing would be measured out to it if men were visited for their transgressions. But what punishment could be heavy enough ? What form shall the chastisement take ? O liar, "what shall be given unto thee ?"

"*Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue ?*" How shalt thou be visited ?

The law of retaliation can hardly meet the case, since none can slander the slanderer, he is too black to be blackened; neither would any of us blacken him if we could. Wretched being! He fights with weapons which true men cannot touch. Like the cuttlefish, he surrounds himself with an inky blackness into which honest men cannot penetrate. Like the foul skunk, he emits an odour of falsehood which cannot be endured by the true; and therefore he often escapes, unchastised by those whom he has most injured. His crime, in a certain sense, becomes his shield; men do not care to encounter so base a foe. But what will God do with lying tongues? He has uttered his most terrible threats against them, and he will terribly execute them in due time.

4. "*Sharp arrows of the mighty.*" Swift, sure, and sharp shall be the judgment. Their words were as arrows, and so shall their punishment be. God will see to it that their punishment shall be comparable to an arrow keen in itself, and driven home with all the force with which a mighty man shoots it from his bow of steel,—"*sharp arrows of the mighty.*" Nor shall one form of judgment suffice to avenge this complicated sin. The slanderer shall feel woes comparable to *coals of juniper*, which are quick in flaming, fierce in blazing, and long in burning. He shall feel sharp arrows and sharper fires. Awful doom! All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Juniper-coals long retain their heat, but hell burneth ever, and the deceitful tongue may not deceive itself with the hope of escape from the fire which it has kindled. What a crime is this to which the All-merciful allots a doom so dreadful! Let us hate it with perfect hatred. It is better to be the victim of slander than to be the author of it. The shafts of calumny will miss the mark, but not so the arrows of God: the coals of malice will cool, but not the fire of justice. Shun slander as you would avoid hell.

5. "*Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!*" Gracious men are vexed with the conversation of the wicked. Our poet felt himself to be as ill-at-ease among lying neighbours as if he had lived among savages and cannibals. The traitors around him were as bad as the unspeakable Turk. He cries "*Woe is me!*" Their sin appalled him, their enmity galled him. He had some hope from the fact that he was only a sojourner in Mesech; but as years rolled on the time dragged heavily, and he feared that he might call himself a dweller in Kedar. The wandering tribes to whom he refers were constantly at war with one another; it was their habit to travel armed to the teeth; they were a kind of plundering gipsies, with their hand against every man and every man's hand against them; and to these he compared the false-hearted ones who had assailed his character. Those who defame the righteous are worse than cannibals; for savages only eat men after they are dead, but these wretches eat them up alive.

"Woe's me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long;
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong.

My soul with him that hateth peace
Hath long a dweller been;
I am for peace; but when I speak,
For battle they are keen.

My soul distracted mourns and pines
To reach that peaceful shore,
Where all the weary are at rest,
And troublers vex no more."

6. "*My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.*" Long, long enough, too long had he been an exile among such barbarians. A peace-maker is a blessing, but a peace-hater is a curse. To lodge with such for a night is dangerous, but to dwell with them is horrible. The verse may apply to any one of the Psalmist's detractors: he had seen enough of him and pined to quit such company. Perhaps the sweet singer did not at first detect the nature of the man, for he was a deceiver; and when he did discover him he found himself unable to shake him off, and so was compelled to abide with him. Thoughts of Doeg, Saul, Ahithophel, and the sons of Zeruah come to our mind,—these last, not as enemies, but as hot-blooded soldiers who were often too strong for David. What a change for the man of God from the quietude

of the sheepfold to the turmoil of court and the tumult of combat! How he must have longed to lay aside his sceptre, and to resume his crook. He felt the time of his dwelling with quarrelsome spirits to be long, too long; and he only endured it because, as the Prayer-book version has it, he was *constrained* so to abide.

7. "*I am for peace.*" Properly, "I am peace"; desirous of peace, peacefūl, forbearing,—in fact, peace itself. "*But when I speak, they are for war.*" My kindest words appear to provoke them, and they are at daggers drawn at once. Nothing pleases them; if I am silent they count me morose, and if I open my mouth they cavil and controvert. Let those who dwell with such pugilistic company console themselves with the remembrance that both David and David's Lord endured the same trial. It is the lot of the saints to find foes even in their own households. Others besides David dwelt in the place of dragons. Others besides Daniel have been cast into a den of lions. Meanwhile, let those who are in quiet resting-places and peaceful habitations be greatly grateful for such ease. *Deus nobis hæc otia fecit*: God has given us this tranquillity. Be it ours never to inflict upon others that from which we have been screened ourselves.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—"A Song of Degrees." A most excellent song, Tremellius rendereth it; and so indeed this and the fourteen following are, both for the matter, and for the form or manner of expression, which is wondrous short and sweet, as the very epigrams of the Holy Ghost himself, wherein each verse may well stand for an oracle. And in this sense, *adam hammahalah*, or, a man of degrees, is put for an eminent or excellent man: 1 Chron. xvii. 17. Others understand it otherwise; wherein they have good leave to abound in their own sense; an error here is not dangerous.—*John Trapp.*

Whole Psalm.—In the interpretation of these Psalms, which sees in them the "degrees" of Christian virtues, this Psalm aptly describes the first of such steps—the renunciation of the evil and vanity of the world. It thus divides itself into two parts. 1. The Psalmist, in the person of one beginning the grades of virtue, finds many opponents in the shape of slanderers and ill advisers. 2. He laments the admixture of evil—"Woe is me."—*H. T. Armfield.*

Whole Psalm.—It is a painful but useful lesson which is taught by this first of the Pilgrim Psalms, that all who manifest a resolution to obey the commands and seek the favour of God, may expect to encounter opposition and reproach in such a course. . . . This these worshippers of old found when preparing to seek the Lord in his Temple. They were watched in their preparation by malignant eyes; they were followed to the house of prayer by the contempt and insinuations of bitter tongues. But their refuge is in him they worship; and, firmly convinced that he never can forsake his servants, they look up through the cloud of obloquy to his throne, and implore the succour which they know that his children shall ever find there. "*O LORD, in this my trouble deliver my soul.*"—*Robert Nisbet.*

Whole Psalm.—The pilgrims were leaving home; and lying lips commonly attack the absent. They were about to join the pilgrim caravan; and in the excitements of social intercourse their own lips might easily deviate from truth. The Psalm, moreover, breathes an intense longing for peace; and in this world of strife and confusion, when is that longing inappropriate? Is it any marvel that a Hebrew, with a deep spiritual longing for peace, should cry as he started for the Temple, "Let me get out of all that, at least for a time. Let me be quit of this fever and strain, free from the vain turbulence and conflicting noises of the world. Let me rest and recreate myself a while in the sacred asylum and sanctuary of the God of peace. God of peace, grant me thy peace as I worship in thy presence; and let me find a bettered world when I come back to it, or at least bring a bettered and more patient heart to its duties and strifes."—*Samuel Cox.*

Verse 1.—"In my distress I cried unto the LORD," etc. See the wondrous advantage of trouble,—that it makes us call upon God; and again see the wondrous readiness of mercy, that when we call he heareth us! Very blessed are they that mourn while

they are travelling the long upward journey from the Galilee of the Gentiles of this lower world to the heavenly Jerusalem, the high and holy city of the saints of God.—*J. W. Burgon, in "A Plain Commentary."*

Verse 1.—"In my distress." God's help is seasonable; it comes when we need it. Christ is a seasonable good. . . . For the soul to be dark, and for Christ to enlighten it; for the soul to be dead, and Christ to enliven it; for the soul to be doubting, and for Christ to resolve it; and for the soul to be distressed, and for Christ to relieve it; is not this in season? For a soul to be hard, and for Christ to soften it; for a soul to be haughty, and for Christ to humble it; for a soul to be tempted, and for Christ to succour it; and for a soul to be wounded, and for Christ to heal it? Is not this in season?—*R. Mayhew, 1679.*

Verse 1.—"Cried." "Heard." The verbs are in the past tense, but do not refer merely to a past occasion. Past experience and present are here combined. From the past he draws encouragement for the present.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 1.—"And he heard me." The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much: James v. 16; Zech. xiii. 9. He that prayeth ardently, speedeth assuredly (Ps. xci. 15); and the unmisscarrying return of prayer should be carefully observed and thankfully improved: Ps. lxvi. 20.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips," etc. An unbridled tongue is *vehiculum Diaboli*, the chariot of the Devil, wherein he rides in triumph. Mr. Greenham doth describe the tongue prettily by contraries, or diversities: "It is a little piece of flesh, small in quantity, but mighty in quality; it is soft, but slippery; it goeth lightly, but falleth heavily; it striketh soft, but woundeth sore; it goeth out quickly, but burneth vehemently; it pierceth deep, and therefore not healed speedily; it hath liberty granted easily to go forth, but it will find no means easily to return home; and being once inflamed with Satan's bellows, it is like the fire of hell." The course of an unruly tongue is to proceed from evil to worse, to begin with foolishness, and go on with bitterness, and to end in mischief and madness. See Eccles. x. 13. The Jew's conference with our Saviour began with arguments: "We be Abraham's seed," said they, etc.; but proceeded to blasphemies: "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" and ended in cruelty: "Then took they up stones to cast at him." John viii. 33, 48, 59. This also is the base disposition of a bad tongue to hate those whom it afflicts: Prov. xxvi. 28.

The mischief of the tongue may further appear by the mercy of being delivered from it, for, 1. So God hath promised it (Job v. 15, 21). "God saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty," and "thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue," or from being betongued, as some render it, that is, from being, as it were, caned or cudgelled with the tongues of others. "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues" (Ps. xxxi. 20); that is, from all calumnies, reproaches, evil speakings of all kinds. God will preserve the good names of his people from the blots and bespatterings of malicious men, as kings protect their favourites against slanders and clamours. 2. So the saints have prayed for it, as David: "Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue."—*Edward Reyner.*

Verse 2.—"Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips," etc. In the drop of venom which distils from the sting of the smallest insect, or the spike of the nettle-leaf, there is concentrated the quintessence of a poison so subtle that the microscope cannot distinguish it, and yet so virulent that it can inflame the blood, irritate the whole constitution, and convert day and night into restless misery; so it is sometimes with the words of the slanderer.—*Frederick William Robertson.*

Verse 2.—"Lying lips" bore false witness against him, or with a "deceitful tongue" tried to ensnare him, and to draw something from him, on which they might ground an accusation.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—"What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?" What dost thou expect, "thou false tongue," in pleading a bad cause? What fee or reward hast thou for being an accuser instead of an advocate? What shall it profit thee (as we put it in the margin); what shalt thou gain by thy deceitful tongue? or (as our margin hath it again), "What shall the deceitful tongue give unto thee," that thou goest about slandering thy brother, and tearing his good name? Hath thy deceitful tongue houses or lands to give thee? hath it any

treasures of gold and silver to bestow upon thee? Surely, as itself is, so it gives only "*Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper*," as the next verse intimates. . . . The tongue indeed will speak often in these cases *gratis*, or without a fee; but it never doth without danger and damage to the speaker. As such speakers shoot arrows, like the arrows of the mighty, and as they scatter coals, like the coals of juniper, so they usually get an arrow in their own sides, and not only burn their fingers, but heap coals of fire upon their own heads. Ungodly men will do mischief to other men purely for mischief's sake: yet when once mischief is done it proves most mischievous to the doers of it; and while they hold their brethren's heaviness a profit, though they are never the better, they shall feel and find themselves in a short time much the worse.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verses 3, 4.—"*What shall be given?*" Intimating that his enemy expected some great reward for his malice against David; but, saith the Psalmist, he shall have "*sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper*"; as if he had said, "Whatever reward he have from men, this shall be his reward from God."—*John Jackson*, in "*The Morning Exercises*," 1661.

Verses 3, 4.—The victim of slander, in these heavy complaints he has just uttered, may be indulging in excess, which pious friends are represented as coming forward to reprove by reminding him how little a true servant of God can be really injured by slander. Hence, as in the margin of our Bibles, the Psalm assumes the dramatic form, and represents his fellow-worshippers as asking the complainer: What evil, O servant of God, can the false tongue give to thee! Nursling of Omnipotence, what can it do to thee! . . . The answer of suffering nature and bleeding peace still returns: "*It is like the sharp arrows of the mighty, like coals of juniper*." An arrow from the bow of a mighty warrior, that flies unseen and unsuspected to its mark, and whose presence is only known when it quivers in the victim's heart, not unaptly represents the silent and deadly flight of slander; while the fire which the desert pilgrim kindles on the sand, from the dry roots of the juniper, a wood which, of all that are known to him, throws out the fiercest and most continued heat, is not less powerfully descriptive of the intense pain and the lasting injury of a false and malicious tongue.—*Robert Nisbet*.

Verses 3, 4.—"*Coals of juniper*," these "*shall be given unto thee*." As if he had said, thou shalt have the hottest coals, such coals as will maintain heat longest, implying that the hottest and most lasting wrath of God should be their portion. Some naturalists say that coals of juniper raked up in the ashes will keep fire a whole year; but I stay not upon this.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 4.—"*Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper*." The world's sin is the world's punishment. A correspondence is frequently observed between the transgression and the retribution. . . . This law of correspondence seems to be here indicated. Similar figures are employed to express the offence and the punishment of the wicked. "*They bend their tongue like a bow for lies*." "*Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot in secret at the perfect*." But let the slanderer be upon his guard. There is another bow besides that in his possession. The arrows are sharp and burning; and when they are sent from the bow by the arm of Omnipotence, nothing can resist their force, and in mortal agony his enemies bite the dust. "He hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death: he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." "God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded; so shall they make their own tongue fall upon themselves." This train of thought is also pursued in the illustration of fire. James compares the tongue of slander to fire. "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among the members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Such is the tongue, and here is the punishment: "*Coals of juniper*," remarkable for their long retention of heat. And yet what a feeble illustration of the wrath of God, which burns down to the lowest hell! "His lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire." Liars are excluded from heaven by a special enactment of the Sovereign; and all of them "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" With what solemn awe should we not cry out to the Lord,

"Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men!"—*N. McMichael*, in "*The Pilgrim Psalms*," 1860.

Verse 4.—"Sharp arrows of the mighty." He compareth wicked doctrine to an arrow which is not blunt, but sharp; and moreover which is cast, not of him that is weak and feeble, but that is strong and mighty; so that there is danger on both sides, as well of the arrow which is sharp and able to pierce, as also of him which with great violence hurleth the same.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 4.—"Arrows." "Coals of juniper." When the tongue is compared to "arrows," there is a reference (according to the Midrash), to the irrevocableness of the tongue's work. Even the lifted sword may be stayed, but the shot arrow may not. The special point to be drawn out in the mention of "coals of juniper," is the unextinguishableness of such fuel. There is a marvellous story in the Midrash which illustrates this very well. Two men in the desert sat down under a juniper tree, and gathered sticks of it wherewith they cooked their food. After a year they passed over the same spot where was the dust of what they had burned; and remarking that it was now twelve months since they had the fire, they walked fearlessly upon the dust, and their feet were burned by the "coals" beneath it, which were still unextinguished.—*H. T. Armfield*.

Verse 4.—"Coals of juniper." The fire of the *rothem* burns for a very long time covered with its ashes; like malignant slander. But the secret malignity becomes its own terrible punishment.—*William Kay*.

Verse 4.—"Coals of juniper." We here [at Wádí Kinnah] found several Bedouins occupied in collecting brushwood, which they burn into charcoal for the Cairo market; they prefer for this purpose the thick roots of the shrub *Retham*, *Genista rætam* of Forskal, which grows here in abundance.—*Johann Ludwig Burckhardt*, 1784—1817.

Verse 4.—"Coals of juniper." At this time we spoke four "ships of the desert," bound for Cairo, and loaded with "coals of juniper," or, in other words, with charcoal made from the roots or branches of the *ratam*, or white broom of the desert, the identical bush referred to by the sacred writer.—*John Wilson*, in "*The Lands of the Bible visited and described*," 1847.

Verse 4.—By "coals of juniper," we understand arrows made of this wood, which when heated possesses the property of retaining the heat for a long time: and consequently, arrows of this kind, after having been placed in the fire, would in the hands of the warrior do terrible execution.

Some persons think that this verse is not to be understood as a figurative description of calumny, but rather of the punishment which God will inflict upon the calumniator. They therefore regard this as an answer to the question in the preceding verse: "What shall he give?" etc.—*George Phillips*.

Verse 5.—"Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" Mesech was a son of Japheth; and the name here signifies his descendants, the Mosques, who occupied that wild mountain region which lies between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. Kedar, again, was a son of Ishmael; and the name here signifies his descendants, the wandering tribes, whose "hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them." There is no geographical connection between those two nations: the former being upon the north of Palestine, and the latter upon the south. The connection is a moral one. They are mentioned together, because they were fierce and warlike barbarians. David had never lived on the shores of the Caspian Sea, or in the Arabian wilderness; and he means no more than this, that the persons with whom he now dwelt were as savage and quarrelsome as Mesech and Kedar. After a similar fashion, we call rude and troublesome persons Turks, Tartars, and Hottentots. David exclaims, I am just as miserable among these haters of peace, as if I had taken up my abode with those savage and treacherous tribes.—*N. McMichael*.

Verse 5.—"Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech," etc. David exclaims, *Alas for me!* because, dwelling amongst false brethren and a bastard race of Abraham, he was wrongfully molested and tormented by them, although he had behaved himself towards them in good conscience. Since then, at the present day, in the church of Rome, religion is dishonoured by all manner of disgraceful imputations, faith torn in pieces, light turned into darkness, and the majesty of God exposed to the grossest mockeries, it will certainly be impossible for those who have any feeling of true piety within them to lie in the midst of such pollutions without great anguish of spirit.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 6.—The Arabs are naturally thievish and treacherous; and it sometimes happens, that those very persons are overtaken and pillaged in the morning who were entertained the night before with all the instances of friendship and hospitality. Neither are they to be accused for plundering strangers only, and attacking almost every person whom they find unarmed and defenceless, but for those many implacable and hereditary animosities which continually subsist among them; literally fulfilling the prophecy of Hagar, that “Ishmael should be a wild man; his hand should be against every man, and every man’s hand against him.”—*Thomas Shaw, 1692—1751.*

Verse 6.—Our Lord was with the wild beasts in the wilderness. There are not a few who would rather face even these than the angry spirits which, alas, are still to be found even in Christian Churches.—*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, 1879.*

Verses 6, 7.—What holy and gentle delight is associated with the very name of *peace!* Peace resting upon our bosom, and soothing all its cares: peace resting upon our households, and folding all the members in one loving embrace: peace resting upon our country, and pouring abundance from her golden horn: peace resting upon all nations, and binding them together with the threefold cord of a common humanity, a common interest, and a common religion! The man who hates peace is a dishonour to the race, an enemy to his brother, and a traitor to his God. He hates Christ, who is the Prince of peace. He hates Christians, who are men of peace.—*N. McMichael.*

Verse 7.—“*I am for peace,*” etc. Jesus was a man of peace; he came into our world, and was worshipped at his nativity as the Prince of peace: there was universal peace throughout the world at the time of his birth; he lived to make peace “by the blood of his cross:” he died to complete it. When he was going out of the world, he said to his disciples, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”: John xiv. 27. When he was risen from the dead, and made his first appearance to his disciples, he said unto them, “Peace be unto you”: he is the peace-maker: the Holy Ghost is the peace-maker: his gospel is the gospel of peace; it contains the peace of God which passeth all understanding. “*I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.*” The bulk of the Jewish nation abhorred Christ, they were for putting him to death; to avenge which, the Lord brought the Roman army against them, and many of them were utterly destroyed. So David literally was for peace with Saul; yet, when opportunities made way for any negotiations, it was soon discovered Saul was for war, instead of peace, with him.

May we see how this, which is the introductory Psalm to those fourteen which follow, styled *Songs of Degrees*, hath a concern with our Lord Jesus Christ; and that David the son of Jesse was in many cases a type of him, and several of his enemies, sorrows, and griefs, forerunning figures of what would befall Messiah, and come upon him. Amen.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verse 7.—“*I am for peace.*” Good men love peace, pray for it, seek it, pursue it, will give anything but a good conscience for it. Compare Matt. v. 9; Heb. xii. 14: *W. S. Plumer.* “It is a mark of a pious man, as far as in him is, to seek peace”: *Amesius.* “I would not give one hour of brotherly love for a whole eternity of contention.”—*Dr. Ruffner.*

Verse 7.—“*When I speak, they are for war.*” He spoke with all respect and kindness that could be; proposed methods of accommodation; spoke reason, spoke love; but they would not so much as hear him patiently; but cried out, To arms! To arms! so fierce and implacable were they, and so bent on mischief. Such were Christ’s enemies: for his love they were his adversaries; and for his good words and good works they stoned him; and if we meet with such enemies we must not think it strange, nor love peace the less for our seeking it in vain. “Be not overcome of evil,” no, not of such evil as this; “but,” even when thus tried, still try to “overcome evil with good.”—*Matthew Henry.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—A reminiscence. I. It is threefold; distress, prayer, deliverance. II. It has a threefold bearing: it excites my hope, stimulates my petitions, and arouses my gratitude.

Verse 1.—I. Special trouble: "In my distress." II. Special prayer: "I cried unto the Lord." III. Special favour: "He heard me."—*G. R.*

*Verse 2.—*The unjustly slandered have, besides the avenging majesty of their God to protect them, many other consolations, as—1. The consciousness of innocence to sustain them. 2. The promise of divine favour to support them: "I will hide thee from the scourge of the tongue." 3. There is the consideration to soothe: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you," etc. 4. That a lie has not usually a long life. 5. There is, lastly, for comfort, the repairing influence of time.—*R. Nisbet.*

Verse 2.—A prayer against slander. We are liable to it; it would do us great injury and cause us great pain; yet none but the Lord can protect us from it, or deliver us out of it.

Verse 3.—The rewards of calumny. What can they be? What ought they to be? What have they been?

Verse 3.—I. What the reviler does for others. II. What he does to himself. III. What God will do with him.

*Verse 4.—*The nature of slander and the punishment of slander.

Verse 4.—I. The tongue is sharper than an arrow. 1. It is shot in private. 2. It is tipped with poison. 3. It is polished with seeming kindness. 4. It is aimed at the tenderest part. II. The tongue is more destructive than fire. Its scandals spread with greater rapidity. They consume that which other fires cannot touch, and they are less easily quenched. "The tongue," says an Apostle, "is a fire . . . and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." A fiery dart of the wicked one.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—Bad lodgings. Only the wicked can be at home with the wicked. Our dwelling with them is trying, and yet it may be useful (1) to them, (2) to us: it tries our graces, reveals our character, abates our pride, drives us to prayer, and makes us long to be home.

Verse 5.—I. None but the wicked enjoy the company of the wicked. II. None but the worldly enjoy the company of worldlings. III. None but the righteous enjoy the company of the righteous.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—I. Trying company. II. Admirable behaviour. III. Undesirable consequences: "When I speak they are for war."

Verse 7.—The character of the man of God. He is at peace. He is for peace. He is peace. He shall have peace.

Verse 7.—I. Piety and peace are united. II. So are wickedness and war.—*G. R.*

